

## Message Text

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ACTION ARA-20

INFO OCT-01 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-07 H-03 INR-10 L-03

NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15 USIA-15

AID-20 OMB-01 RSR-01 /111 W  
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R 032145Z AUG 73

FM AMEMBASSY SAN JOSE  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4726

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN JOSE 2777

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT, CS

SUBJ: EX-PRESIDENTS FAIL TO UNIFY OPPOSITION

REF: SAN JOSE A-143; SAN JOSE 2624

BEGIN SUMMARY: THE THREE COSTA RICAN EX-PRESIDENT'S PLAN TO UNIFY THE ANTI-PLN OPPOSITION FAILED ON JULY 31 WHEN THE PRINCIPAL OPPOSITION PARTY, THE UN, REJECTED IT AND SUBMITTED ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL WHICH WAS REPORTEDLY JUDGED UNACCEPTABLE BY THE UNITY LEADERS. THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO TIME AND APPARENTLY LITTLE INCLINATION FOR FURTHER EFFORTS TO WORK OUT MECHANISMS FOR AGREEMENT ON A SINGLE CANDIDATE BACKED BY THE MAJOR OPPOSITION PARTIES. END SUMMARY.

1. THE SECRETARY-GENERAL OF THE PARTIDO UNIFICACION NACIONAL (UN), GUILLERMO JIMENEZ RAMIREZ, PRESENTED AN ALTERNATIVE PROPOSAL TO THE THREE EX-PRESIDENTS LEADING THE CURRENT OPPOSITION UNITY EFFORT THAT CALLED FOR THE ADDITION OF TWO ADDITIONAL POLITICAL PARTIES TO THE FIVE THAT WERE INTENDED TO PARTICIPATE IN AN ASSEMBLY OF PARTY ASSEMBLIES. JIMENEZ PROPOSED THAT THE UN-AFFILIATED PARTIDO REPUBLICANO (PR) AND THE TERCER FRENTE A SPLINTER OPPOSITION GROUP FRIENDLY TO THE UN CANDIDATE THAT SEPARATELY OPPOSED FIGUERES IN 1970, SHOULD ALSO BE INCLUDED. THE THREE EX-PRESIDENTS, ULATE, ECHANDI, AND TREJOS FERNANDEZ, REPORTEDLY  
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DECLARED THE UN PROPOSAL AS "TOTALLY NEGATIVE."

2. AS INDICATED IN THE REFERENCE AIRGRAM, NEITHER UN PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE TREJOS ESCALANTE NOR PARTIDO RENOVACION DEMOCRATICA (PRD)LPRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATE RODRIGO CARAZO BELIEVED THEIR POLITICAL INTERESTS WOULD BE SERVED BY THE THREE EX-PRESIDENTS' SUGGESTED MODE FOR SELECTING A SINGLE CANDIDATE. ONLY JORGE GONZALEZ MARTEN, CANDIDATE OF THE PARTIDO NACIONALISTA INDEPENDIENTE (PNI), GAVE HIS APPARENTLY UNQUALIFIED PUBLIC ENDORSEMENT TO THE PLAN. CARAZO'S RESPONSE TO THE EX-PRESIDENTS EXPRESSED HIS PREFERENCE THAT ANY MEANS OF CHOOSING A CANDIDATE MUST INVOLVE POPULAR PARTICIPATION, BUT HE CAREFULLY AVOIDED SAYING NO TO THE EX-PRESIDENTS' PROPOSAL. GONZALEX MARTEN'S POSITION WAS CONSIDERED THE MOST POSITIVE OF THE THREE.

A PNI SPOKESMAN WAS REPORTED TO HAVE REPLIED TO THE EX-PRESIDENTS ON BEHALF OF GONZALEZ MARTEN THAT THE PNI WOULD BE IN FAVOR OF ANY "RAPID, UNCOMPROMISED, AND DEMOCRATIC PROCESS" TO CHOOSE A SINGLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE. THE PRESS, PARTICULARLY EL DIARIO, AS COULD HAVE BEEN EXPECTED, ATTRIBUTED RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE UNITY PLAN'S FAILURE TO THE UN. JULIO SUNOL, EL DIARIO'S OWNER, WAS THE PRIME MOVER BEHIND THE EX-PRESIDENTS'S JULY 13 CALL FOR OPPOSITION UNITY (SEE REFTTEL).

3. COMMENT: IT IS SPECULATED AND POSSIBLE THAT JORGE GONZALEX MARTEN, BECAUSE OF HIS EXISTING FINANCIAL PROBLEMS, STIMULATED THIS LATEST UNITY EFFORT AND CONTRIBUTED TO ITS DESIGN. ULATE HAS SHOWN SOME AFFINITY TO GONZALEZ MARTEN'S CANDIDACY AS HAVE MARIO ECHANDI AND JULIO SUNOL. EX-PRESIDENT JOSE JOAQUIN TREJOS FERNANDEZ, KNOWN TO DISLIKE GONZALEZ MARTEN, MAY HAVE BEEN PERSUADED OF THE PATRIOTIC NECESSITY TO PARTICIPATE IN THE EFFORT GIVEN THE URGENCY OF FINDING A MAN BEHIND WHOM FORCES COULD UNITE TO BEAT ODUBER. IN ANY CASE, JORGE GONZALEZ MARTEN STOOD TO GAIN THE MOST GIVEN HIS SEEMING DECLINE IN STRENGTH. TREJOS ESCALANTE, HAVING LEARNED FROM HIS EXPERIENCE LAST WINTER THAT BY INVOLVING HIMSELF IN UNITY EXERCISES HE COULD ONLY LOSE STATURE AS

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THE STRONGEST OPPOSITION CANDIDATE AND PROBABLY STOOD TO LOSE THE OPPOSITION CANDIDACY ITSELF, WISELY REFUSED TO PARTICIPATE UNDER THE GROUND RULES PROPOSED BY THE EX-PRESIDENTS. AS A RESULT, GONZALEZ MARTEN, AS THE MOST FORTHCOMING OF THE THREE, HAS BEEN PRESENTED WITH A CAMPAIGN ADVANTAGE OF STILL UNMEASURABLE IMPORTANCE. HE CAN NOW SAY WITH CREDENCE THAT HE WAS WILLING TO SUBMIT HIS CANDIDACY TO A DEMOCRATIC SELECTION PROCESS,

WHILE TREJOS ESCALANTE DID NOT DARE TO. IF GONZALEZ MARTEN CAN COME UP WITH THE MONEY TO FINANCE A STRONG CAMPAIGN AND IOLTHE EX-PRESIDENTS DECIDE TO SINGLE OUT AND CRITICIZE THE UN FOR DESTROYING THE PROSPECTS FOR UNITY, THE PNI HAS PROFITED FROM THIS EXERCISE. SOME PNI LEADERS ARE NOW TALKING ABOUT ACCEPTING THE UN'S ALTERNATIVE PROPOSITION FOR SEVEN PARTIES IN AN ASSEMBLY OF ASSEMBLIES. IF SUCH A PROPOSAL IS SURFACED IT WILL ONLY PROVE THE WEAKNESS OF THE PNI. MOREOVER, AS THE UN PLANS TO OPEN ITS FORMAL CAMPAIGN IN EARLY AUGUST AND THE PARTY ITSELF SEEMS NOW TO BE SOLIDLY BEHIND TREJOS' CANDIDACY THERE IS PRACTICALLY NO RPT NO CHANCE THAT FURTHER ATTEMPTS WILL PROSPER TOWARD GONZALEZ MARTEN FINDING A FORMULA SATISFACTORY TO BOTH GONZALEZ MARTEN AND TREJOS EXCALANTE THAT WOULD RESULT IN A SINGLE OPPOSITION CANDIDATE. UNDOUBTEDLY, THE UN WILL NOW INCREASE ITS EFFORTS TO REACH A BILATERAL ARRANGEMENT WITH THE PNI, BUT ANY SUCCESS IN THIS DIRECTION WILL HEAVILY DEPEND ON THE SIZE OF THE REPUTEDLY DEPLETED PNI CAMPAIGN CHOICE. IN OTHER WORDS, ANY COMBINATION OF THE OPPOSITION PARTIES FROM NOW ON WILL LIKELY ARISE FROM THE PROCESS OF NATURAL SELECTION; TIME HAS RUN OUT ON GRANDIOSE AND COMPLICATED UNITY SCHEMES.

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## Message Attributes

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**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
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**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** golinofr  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
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**Page Count:** 3  
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**Previous Handling Restrictions:** n/a  
**Reference:** 73 SAN JOSE A-143, 73 SAN JOSE 2624  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** golinofr  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 18 JAN 2002  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <18-Jan-2002 by thigpegh>; APPROVED <11 FEB 2002 by golinofr>  
**Review Markings:**

Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
30 JUN 2005

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** EX-PRESIDENTS FAIL TO UNIFY OPPOSITION  
**TAGS:** PINT, CS  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005